

The Municipality of
Metropolitan Toronto

Parks and Property Department



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Municipal Reference

No. 6
January 16, 1985

THE PARKS, RECREATION AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE:

Re: Park User Survey Results - 1984

The importance of user studies related to the Metro Parks System was noted in the recent review of this Department by the Management Services Department as well as our own "10 Year Concept Plan of Major Recreation Facilities". Such surveys provide invaluable input to the planning process as it relates to user characteristics, perceptions of existing and future planned services, facility satisfaction and future trends. Recognizing this need a comprehensive user survey was undertaken in the 1984 Summer season focusing on the constituent parks within the Central Don Parks System and three Waterfront Parks, namely Humber Bay East, Humber Bay West and Ashbridge's Bay. In total, 1,204 members of the public were interviewed. This study, while general in nature, covered a broad spectrum of topics and provided specific information related to park visitor characteristics, mode of transport, activities undertaken, facility service satisfaction and suggestions for improvements and/or changes.

Frequency distributions of the coded questionnaire results were computer calculated to expedite the analysis process. Computer assisted mapping was also utilized to plot the place of residence (based on nearest intersection) of those park visitors who took part in the surveys.

The sub-sections to follow highlight the major conclusions resulting from the surveys.

The Park User

This survey has confirmed that the typical park visitor is in the young to middle-aged group (25 - 44 years). Specifically, 53.4 per cent of those interviewed in the Central Don Park System and 51.8 per cent of the Waterfront group fall into this category. Additionally, 30.1 per cent of the Central Don System users were under the age of 24 with only 16.5 per cent over 44. Conversely, the Waterfront Parks exhibited a greater percentage of users in the 45 plus age group (37.5 per cent). This difference may be attributed to the more active type recreation facilities in the Central Don and the large concentration of picnic facilities which cater to family activities. In comparison, the Waterfront appears to appeal to more passive park pursuits such as walking activities and pleasure viewing.

Male participation exceeds that of females with 60.2 per cent of the Central Don users being male as opposed to 39.8 per cent female. Results from the Waterfront Parks were correspondingly 80.4 per cent male and 19.6 per cent female.

This survey has confirmed the important role that the Metropolitan Parks serve as a location for small group and family inter-action. For example, greater than 50 per cent of visits to the Waterfront and mainland parks studied were by parties comprised of two to five individuals (primarily couples and families). Larger group outings are more frequent in the mainland parks (30.5 per cent) as opposed to the Waterfront (13.8 per cent) attributed to large group picnic facilities and proximity to high density residential areas.

The regional attraction value of the parks is demonstrated by the high percentage of visitors who drive to the parks, 71.9 per cent, in the case of the mainland parks and 84.4 per cent in the case of the Waterfront parks. The second most significant mode of transportation is walking and/or cycling, 25.1 per cent in the Central Don and 11 per cent in the Waterfront. Public transit accounts for 2.6 per cent in the Central Don Park System and 4.2 per cent in the Waterfront Parks. Maps displaying place of residence indicate that approximately 85 per cent of visitors reside within Metropolitan Toronto with 15 per cent living outside of Metropolitan Toronto.

The survey has also confirmed that a high percentage of users remain in the park for half day outings (Central Don 46.7 per cent and Waterfront 57 per cent). This can be explained by the activities undertaken and the fact that many visitors drive to the parks from outside the immediate area.

An encouraging statistic is the significant proportion of those interviewed who make use of the parks in the winter, particularly for cross country skiing. In the case of the Central Don Parks System, 17.7 per cent of those interviewed indicated that they make visits to the park in the winter season. Similarly, 16.3 per cent of the Waterfront Park users noted that they also utilize the park in the winter. These results speak well for our efforts over the last five years to increase the visitor amenities to this group.

A number of questions in the survey were designed to ascertain user acceptance and satisfaction with respect to facilities and services provided. For example, frequency of repeat use indicates in part the public's acceptance and satisfaction with the facilities and services. The appended chart indicates that both the Central Don and Waterfront Parks reveal strong repeat patronage with 88.9 per cent and 81.7 per cent respectively having visited the park in the past. By far, the majority of visitors use the park either once or twice per week or, at least once a month.

For all parks surveyed, more than 90 per cent of the users believed that the existing facilities were acceptable. Where comments were received related to additional services they tended to be for support facilities such as additional park furniture, comfort stations and increased signage (45 per cent of Central Don requests for improvements fall in this category). In the case of the Waterfront Parks, 15.7 per cent of the replies requested these same types of support facilities. In the Central Don 24.4 per cent of the patrons suggested picnic site improvements such as picnic tables, water taps, ash bins, etc. and 17.9 per cent requested recreation facilities, particularly swimming areas and playground equipment. In

the Waterfront parks, 11 per cent of those requesting facilities noted the need for additional food concessions with 9.2 per cent suggesting more recreation facilities.

Respecting park maintenance, the vast majority of the park visitors find the parks clean and inviting. Some concerns were noted with respect to loud radio music, unrestrained dogs and traffic congestion experienced on the peak summer weekends.

In summary, there is overwhelming public support for the types of facilities and services being offered and the efforts of the Department to improve its facility base particularly as it relates to the bicycle trail system and amenities associated with winter use of the parks. Most visitors appeared to favour the blend of active and passive recreation facilities.

While this study provides useful information as it relates to the regional park visitors, their use of the parks, needs assessment and satisfaction, it is recognized that further studies of a more specific nature are required. Reviews of concession facilities would likewise help to provide direction as to public acceptance of these facilities and the potential for future application. A winter use survey would also help in determining further strategies designed to encourage park patronage within this season.

It is our intent to undertake these studies in the upcoming years and incorporate the results in our capital works and operational planning programmes.

Accordingly, this report is respectfully submitted for your information.

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No. 4148



ROBERT G. BUNDY,
COMMISSIONER OF PARKS AND PROPERTY.

Appendix

Park User Survey - 1984

N/A - No Answer

		Total Central Don (941)	Total Waterfront (263)
		<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Transportation	N/A	0.4	
Transit		2.6	4.2
Private Vehicle		71.9	84.4
Other (Walking/Cycling)		25.1	11.4
Adequate Parking	N/A	30.7	15.2
Yes		67.3	73.8
No		2.0	11.0
Number In Party	N/A	1.6	0.3
1		13.3	12.2
2		31.1	41.1
3 - 5		23.5	32.6
6 - 10		11.6	11.8
11 - 20		13.8	2.0
21+		5.1	-
Group Description	N/A	10.0	14.9
One or Two Couples		26.9	30.8
One Family		28.2	25.1
Two or More Families		12.8	14.4
Friends		17.4	14.8
Other		4.7	-
Frequency of Use	N/A	.2	-
First Time		10.9	18.3
Daily		12.7	3.0
1 - 2 Times/Week		19.5	27.4
Monthly/Occasionally		34.6	29.3
Weekends		11.7	12.2
Other		10.4	9.8
Length of Stay	N/A	4.4	1.6
1 Hour		21.8	9.9
2 - 4 Hours		46.7	57.0
5+ Hours		27.1	31.5

Seasonal Use

Spring	26.1	22.8
Summer	97.1	100.0
Fall	37.2	27.0
Winter	17.7	16.3

Sex

Male	60.2	80.4
Female	39.8	19.6

Age

N/A

0 - 9	3.0	-
10 - 14	1.4	0.8
15 - 10	10.3	1.1
20 - 24	15.4	8.8
25 - 34	31.2	24.0
35 - 44	22.2	27.8
45 - 54	7.1	18.6
55 - 64	5.3	13.6
65+	4.1	5.3

Activities

Picnicking	47.2	26.2
B-B-Q	34.9	9.5
Walking	32.3	49.8
Hiking	.1	.4
Jogging	8.9	4.2
Vita Parcours Fitness Trail	1.1	-
Bicycling	20.8	9.1
Cross-country skiing	2.3	-
Horseback Riding	1.0	-
General Relaxation	41.1	57.0
National Environment	11.4	1.5
Swimming	-	12.2
Team Sport Activities	7.0	-
Food Concession	1.3	-
Special Events	.3	.4
Public Washrooms	5.3	-
Archery	1.7	-
Boating	0.1	8.0

Additional Facilities	N/A	36.7	63.9
Picnic Site Improvements		24.4	5.4
Bike Facility Improvements		5.0	0.4
Security Improvements		1.7	1.9
Recreation Facilities		17.9	9.2
Sportsfield Improvements		3.3	0.4
Support Amenities		45.4	15.7
Horticultural Improvements		1.0	0.8
Catering Facilities		6.8	11.1
Park Signage Adequate	N/A	-	0.4
Yes		87.5	98.1
No		12.5	1.5
General Comments	N/A	53.7	77.4
Complimentary		36.7	6.9
Complaints/General		2.7	5.3
Complaints/Traffic		4.9	0.8
Complaints/Cleanliness		2.0	9.6